

## **Final Reflection**

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CYSE 368: Cyber Clinic

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May 7th, 2026

## Successes and Setbacks

Throughout my time in the Cyber Clinic, I was able to experience a great deal of new experiences and challenges. I will start with what went right. I think overall my time at the Cyber Clinic was very successful, from the numerous lessons I learned from the training portion of the course, all the way to actually working with 17th Street Automotive. One specific milestone that I think went really well was the initial visit with our client. It was a very nerve-wracking experience; however, thanks to the in-class training, my team and I were able to navigate it effectively. I think communication with our client was another very important milestone. We had an in-person visit as well as weekly Zoom calls. Lastly, the final presentation to 17th Street Automotive was by far one of my greatest successes. For context, I am awful at public speaking and get terrible anxiety whenever I give a presentation. I was especially concerned because I felt as though I had been assigned a majority of the slides; however, I was really surprised by how well it went.

I will now move on to what went wrong. It does slightly hurt for me to point out my own mistakes; however, mistakes are necessary to learn and grow from experiences. To start, a major pain point for me was the research paper. My team and I were relatively late to start on the paper. During the first few weeks, we definitely weren't sure exactly what we were supposed to do, so we ended up working on a lot of extra deliverables that were beneficial but had little to do with the final paper. Once the due date of the paper became imminent, my team decided to use the roles that were used in the past: team lead, research lead, and design lead. This was honestly an awful decision, and there was a reason the Cyber Clinic stopped using them. I ended up with the role of research lead. While I was a little bit concerned about using the old team roles, I didn't think it was going to be an issue. This is the point where I made a huge mistake by not clearly

stating what my expectations of my teammates were. While I was the research lead, I was expecting that I would have to take the lead on the paper and maybe put a little bit more effort into it than my teammates; however, I ended up writing pretty much the whole thing by myself the day before it was due. This situation wasn't fair to my teammates or me, and if I had clearly and more directly stated my expectations, it could have been avoided entirely.

While I am unhappy with how I handled the situation, I think this will serve as an example or reference point for the rest of my life. I have now experienced the negative effects of poor communication of expectations. I highly doubt I will ever allow something like this to happen again. If I had to do it all over, I would definitely take charge of the project, start working on the report sooner, and have each of us do one-third of everything. I think using this approach definitely would have made the experience more valuable for everyone involved and improved the quality of my work.

## Evaluation of MOA Objectives

### 1. Practical Application of Knowledge

#### **Fulfilled**

Transitioning from the theoretical frameworks taught at ODU to the Cyber Clinic allowed me to apply risk assessment methodologies to real-world small-business infrastructure. Working as a cyber risk management specialist, I moved beyond hypothetical labs to analyzing real-world vulnerabilities. For instance, I utilized my understanding of security controls to recommend tangible policy changes that addressed specific client gaps.

## 2. Collaboration and Professional Communication

### **Fulfilled**

Being assigned to a three-person team was one of the most vital aspects of this internship. I learned to balance my input with the perspectives of my teammates and the guidance provided by leadership. Translating complex technical risks into actionable policy recommendations for 17th Street Automotive required a shift from "student-speak" to more professional language.

## 3. Exposure to Cyber Threat Intelligence

### **Fulfilled**

Through the clinic, I gained a deeper understanding of the current threat landscape affecting local organizations. Identifying vulnerabilities was about evaluating how those vulnerabilities could be exploited by current attack trends. This real-world exposure reinforced the importance of proactive defense over reactive patching.

## 4. Industry Best Practices and Frameworks

### **Fulfilled**

My role focused heavily on risk management and compliance. I gained hands-on experience with industry-standard frameworks, moving from "learning about" NIST or CISA controls to actually implementing them in a security assessment. This objective was specifically fulfilled through the qualitative risk analysis and policy development work I performed for 17th Street Automotive

## 5. Research and Innovative Solutions

### **Fulfilled**

Cybersecurity is rarely a one-size-fits-all solution. I had to research innovative, cost-effective tools and techniques that small businesses could realistically adopt. This required problem-solving skills to find a balance between high-level security and the operational constraints of the clients we served.

## Motivating vs. Challenging Aspects

The most exciting part for me was the realization that my recommendations could actually prevent a real-world cyberattack and help a real business. Transitioning from a student to a "cyber risk management specialist" under the professional guidance provided a sense of professional identity that the classroom cannot replicate. The most difficult aspect was dealing with the many moving parts and variable passing of the cyber clinic. While the fluid nature of the schedule was made aware to everyone, I still found it challenging to deal with moving and/or unclear dates. In all honesty, though, this is very good practice for real world scenario's outside of school, as due dates are not usually clearly set in stone.

## Recommendations

For future interns to get the most out of this experience, I definitely recommend starting to start working on the final report and presentation as soon as possible. Other than that, I think the Cyber Clinic is already a very well-developed course, and interns can really get a lot out of it as long as they do everything they are asked to. As long as future interns stay open-minded, they will do great.

## Conclusion

The core value of the cyber clinic comes from the experience of actually using developed cybersecurity skills to assist a local business. This allows students to utilize what they have been learning within a professional environment. For me personally, the cyber clinic has not influenced my ODU

studies drastically because I will graduate this semester. I do still want to work in the cybersecurity industry, and the cyber clinic only reinforced that goal. The cyber clinic did this by highlighting the fact that cybersecurity is a service that not only benefits multi-million dollar companies but also everyone, and by working in cybersecurity, you can make a real difference. Lastly, I do have a couple overall course recommendations. First post assignments on Canvas earlier. I personally use the Canvas calendar for just about everything, so not having assignments show up on it is a hassle. Second, rework Valor's involvement. I think Valor can provide a lot to this experience, but currently it feels underwhelming. I think allowing interns to shadow what Valor does in a day could be really cool; however, I know it's a tricky situation given the nature of their work.